sugar has been decanalised to allow sugar factories, firms and individuals alike, to export sugar.

(c) As on 7.4.97, about 118.26 lakh tonnes stock of sugar was available in the country.

On 14.1.97, the eve of the decanalisation, the Retail Issue Price of Levy Sugar distributed through the Public Distribution System was Rs. 9.05 per kg. and the retail price of free sale sugar in the principal markets was in the range of Rs. 13.30 to Rs.16.00 per kg.

(d) The production of sugar in the current season is expected to be around 140 lakh tonnes. Since actual exports would depend on a host of factors including the international market prices, it will not be possible to indicate the exact quantum of exports at present.

**Enormous Escalation in Normative cost of sugar factories in Maharashtra**

4503. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether due to delay in trying up financial arrangements for the 27 new cooperative factories sanctioned for being set up in Maharashtra under the seventh Five Year Plan and another 18 more new Cooperative Sugar Factories under the Eighth Five Year Plan, the normative cost of these factories has undergone enormous escalation; and

(b) if so, whether government of Maharashtra have requested for acceptance of the revised normative cost of these cooperative sugar factories and if so, the proposed revised cost thereof and the Government's decision thereon?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) and (b) The Government of Maharashtra vide their letter dated 4.12.1997, have stated that the cost of a new sugar factory would be around Rs. 45 crores. They have added that IFCI have also recently revised their appraisal around Rs. 42-43 crores.

The Goverment have not prescribed any normative cost for sugar factories though the financial institutions while assessing the projects have been going by a certain standard taking into account the financial pattern and the prospect of return on capital. The financial institutions are generally concerned with the debt-equity ratio and the financial viability of the project. Since the State Governments contribute a large part of equity of the Cooperatives and also have to guarantee the loans, the question of availability of total finance for a particular unit has to be resolved between them, the cooperative and the financial institutions.

**Stock Position of Wheat**

4504. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether quantum of wheat in the national stock in March end this year was much lower than the normal stock in this part of the year;

(b) if so, the comparative stock position of wheat in March end during 1996, 1995, 1994 and 1993;

(c) the reasons for such stock position this year; and

(d) the steps taken to intensify procurement effort and to fix an attractive minimum support price and procurement price of wheat and the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI